



## **United States Embassy Belize** *Press Release*

### **Extraordinary Summit, Remarkable Consensus**

by

Ambassador John F. Maisto

U.S. National Coordinator for the Summit of the Americas

Last month, President Bush joined the other 33 democratically elected leaders of the Hemisphere at a special two-day summit meeting. Fourteen of the leaders were new since the last Summit of the Americas in April 2001. Many face difficult times—political or economic turmoil, budget shortfalls, social crises, mounting poverty. The hopeful atmosphere of Quebec less than three years ago has given way in many of these countries to concerns about lagging growth and satisfying rising expectations.

These leaders agreed to meet in Monterrey, despite the skeptics at home who question the value of such Summits, to strengthen the consensus forged around the core values that unite our countries: a commitment to representative democracy, to ensuring equal opportunity, and to improving the quality of life for the most vulnerable.

In Monterrey, leaders stressed their commitment to implementing sound economic policies, to cutting red tape, to encouraging investment and free trade. They did so because these steps are key to spurring economic growth, which reduces poverty and improves living standards.

In Monterrey, leaders renewed their commitment to fighting disease and to improving basic education, because only populations that are healthy and well educated can compete globally. In Monterrey, leaders reiterated their common commitment to strengthening democratic institutions at home and abroad, because they know democracy is the only foundation on which lasting stability and prosperity can be built.

We should not underestimate the value of the region's commitment to these core values, even as they are being sorely tested.

But more than affirming a set of shared ideals, the Declaration of Nuevo León that leaders signed at the Summit contains something different—perhaps even unique. Woven throughout is evidence that leaders took up the challenge, as President Bush put it, to “set goals that are specific and measurable.”

**P.O. Box 286, Belize City, Belize**  
**Telephone (501) 227-7161, Fax (501) 223-0802**  
**e-mail: [embbelize@state.gov](mailto:embbelize@state.gov)**

Leaders didn't just agree to strengthen democracy. They committed to deny safe haven to corrupt officials, those who corrupt them, and their assets. Leaders didn't just agree to invest in their people. They agreed to provide antiretroviral treatment to at least 600,000 people living with HIV/AIDS by 2005 and to increase accountability in education by publishing country-specific annual reports, no later than 2005, that will allow parents, teachers and communities to evaluate how their education systems are performing.

Leaders didn't just agree to promote economic growth. They agreed to significantly reduce the time and cost required to start a business by 2005; endorsed tripling credit through the Inter-American Development Bank for micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises by 2007; committed to strengthen property rights by 2005; promised to reduce the cost of sending remittances by at least half by 2008; and reaffirmed their determination to complete negotiations on a Free Trade Area of the Americas by 2005, the timetable set at the November 2003 Trade Ministerial in Miami.

In Monterrey, leaders held themselves accountable for taking tangible steps toward resolving the problems the Hemisphere faces today, setting the stage for even closer collaboration over the next two years. Based on a renewed consensus, these actions will demonstrate, as President Bush said, "our determination to succeed and to give hope to millions...lift all our nations, and show the world that free societies and free markets can deliver real benefits to our citizens."